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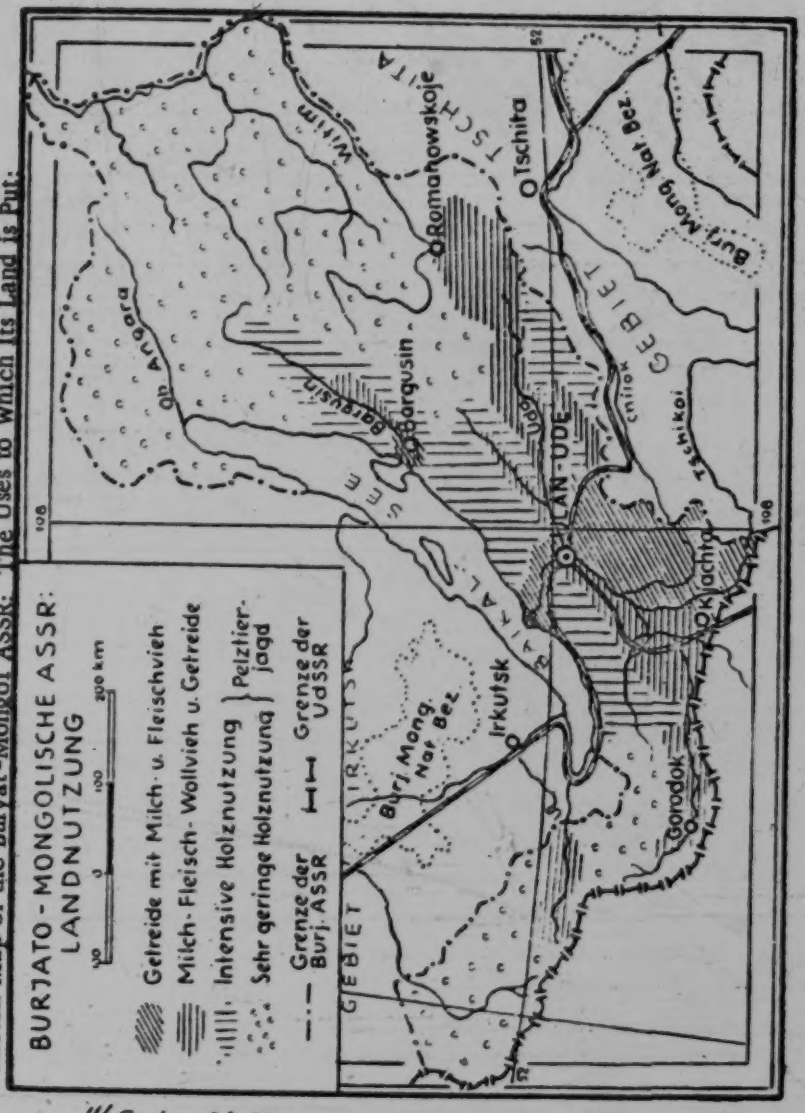
Sketch Map of the Buryat-Mongol ASSR: The Uses to Which Its Land is Put:



Grain with livestock used for milk and meat.
Livestock used for milk, meat, and wool; plus grain.
Intensive exploitation of wood.
Very slight exploitation of wood.
} Hunting of fur-bearing animals.
Border of the Buryat ASSR.
Border of the USSR.

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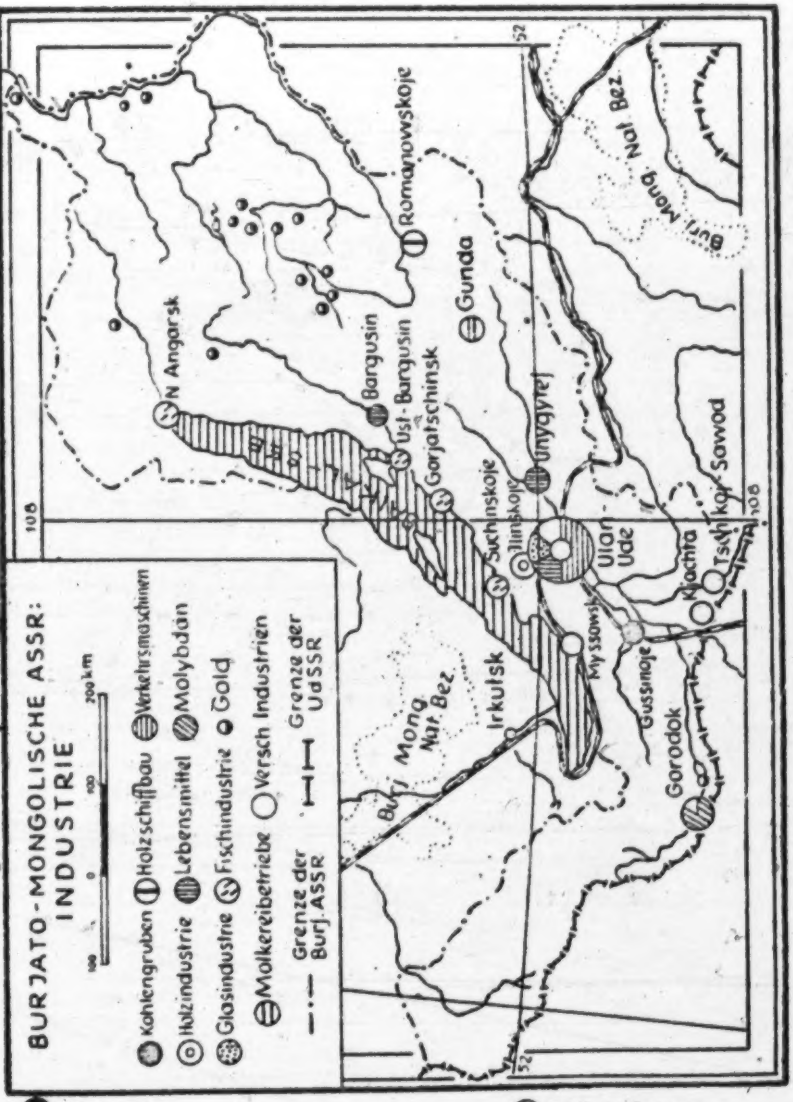
Sketch Map of the Buryat-Mongol ASSR: Industry:



- Coal Mines
- Construction of wooden ships
- Transport machinery
- Wood industry
- Groceries
- Molybdenum
- Glass industry
- Fish industry
- Gold
- Dairy plants
- Various industries

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- Border of the Buryat ASSR
- Border of the USSR

willing to venture into such an inhospitable area, prisoner labor was considered to be the only solution whereby sufficient numbers of personnel would be available in Kolyma to exploit the gold resources there. It was at this time that the collectivization program was in progress in the Soviet Union, and labor was to be found in abundance in the form of those sturdy peasants, especially in the Ukraine and White Russia, who opposed the confiscation of their land into collectivized enterprises. Furthermore, previous attempts at the use of prisoner labor had been satisfactory in the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal. Consequently, it was decided to move large numbers of "socially hostile elements," as they were called, into the Magadan area to exploit the gold fields. 316 655

6) Assumption of Control by Dalstroy (Far Eastern Construction Administration) - 1931-1932: In the winter of 1931-1932 a special administrative unit was established under the name of Dalstroy, and this organization was responsible for the development of the extreme northeastern part of Siberia—the primary task was the exploitation of the gold-rich Kolyma region. It should be noted that Dalstroy was under the direct control of the GPU (later reorganized into the NKVD and again into the MVD), which immediately undertook to supply the organization with huge numbers of laborers. It might be mentioned that Dalstroy had "first pick" of all the prisoners throughout the Soviet Union; simultaneously Dalstroy procured adequate numbers of free-labor specialists, namely, engineers of all types who were to organize the actual exploitation of gold. 635 466

a. The Leadership of Berzin (1932-1937): Berzin was the head of Dalstroy during the years 1932-1937, and since he was the very first of the NKVD chiefs of the organization, his administration was filled with a terrible loss of life; this was not permitted to interfere with his mission, however.

After a preliminary examination of the situation, it was decided to establish a port on the Sea of Okhotsk and penetrate gradually inland rather than to use an overland route. The harbor of Nagayev, located close to the Ola River estuary, was selected as the primary base of operations; this harbor is at present the port which services the chief city of Magadan. (Note: This harbor is approximately 10 miles long and 3 miles wide.) In order to show the complete uninhabitability of the surrounding area near Nagayevo, the port area has been described as "surrounded by ridges of rock which overhang the water. The rocks, sometimes rising a thousand feet or more, protect the harbor, but on their open sides the winds blow unchecked. Down below where the steep cliffs meet the water, there is no land for human shelter. Above, one is blown off one's feet by the force of the wind that is cold, damp, penetrating, and unequalled in ferocity anywhere in the world."[3] Beyond the ridges surrounding the harbor there is a swamp of the type familiar to this region, under which perennial ice exists; beyond the swamps come the taiga.

In the summer of 1932 ships were dispatched from Vladivostok loaded with Dalstroy cargo, including machinery, equipment, foodstuffs, and manpower. The steamers were gifts to the NKVD by the Soviet Government, and each ship made from 12 to 15 voyages from Vladivostok that navigation season. These ships were specially constructed to hold large numbers of prisoners, and machine-guns covered every inch of the cells. No precautions were neglected to prevent the escape of prisoners in the areas where Japanese ships might rescue escapees and learn the nature of the Magadan enterprise.

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3 Ibid., p. 117.

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Upon arrival in Nagayevo harbor, tents were provided for the guards, while prisoners remained unsheltered in barbed-wire enclosures. The official task was to build the port and a city, which was to become Magadan. In order to give a clear picture of the actual difficulty of the operation, the following citation is quoted in full:

> "The prisoners bore the hardships and built. With bare hands they constructed piers for ocean steamers, setting up caissons weighing many tons under the steep cliffs where the sea was 12 to 15 feet deep at the water's edge. They cut broad roads through the stone, leading down to the piers. They built, in order of importance, several plants: a sawmill, a brickyard, a fish-salting factory, ship repair yards, a power station. They began draining the swamp and clearing the taiga adjacent to the spot selected for the future town, felling and uprooting trees, pulling up moss by hand, and harrowing the soil over and over to create a semblance of cultivable top soil as a measure of defense against the encroaching geological ice. They built houses for the administrative staff, which included private houses for the officials and their hired servants; for the GPU they built 'cold-resistant' barracks with double walls filled in with sawdust; they built a special small house for the police dogs which were later to play such an important role in the Kolyma penal camps. There was time and labor for everything except for building barracks for the enslaved workers themselves."[4]

At first there were no established work hours; prisoners "were compelled to work as long as they could stand on their feet; they were required to show 'enthusiasm.' The food was meager—bread, dried fish, sometimes hot soup, and twice a day a mug of hot water."[5] In addition, the fact that workers were continually wet from working in swamps or the construction of the port led to epidemics, and the death rate rose at an incredible rate; disease ultimately spread to the NKVD guards and the hired technical personnel. It was this factor which led to the decision to build barracks for the laborers. These barracks were built with only single boards for the walls, and contained only iron stoves for heat in a climate where -60 degrees in winter is common and where -90 degrees has been recorded. The prisoners were informed that these barracks were only temporary, but in 1946 these very same barracks were still in use.

Every week steamers continued to unload masses of prisoners in Nagayev harbor. These prisoners were all "long-timers" who were chosen because of their physical fitness—most were Siberian farmers, Don and Kuban Cossacks, and Ukrainian and White Russian peasants. It goes without saying that these people were selected from opponents of the collectivization program which had been completed just prior. It would have been a complete waste of time to transport any other than the above mentioned healthy people because experience was to show that only the physically strong were able to exist in Kolyma, and even many of these died within two years.

All of the above activity culminated in the erection of the present city of Magadan; however, Magadan was only to be the base of operation for the actual purpose of the administration, and the gold was in the northern areas in the interior. At this stage laborers were sent into the desolate inner regions with the mission of building roads from the gold fields to the port city; this highway was to extend from

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4 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
5 Ibid., p. 121.

Magadan to Srednikan, and then on to Seimchan. The distance by air was some 200 miles and it was planned to open this road by 1934. The project was begun in the autumn of 1932, but winter set in early, and reliable accounts have claimed that 635 466

> "Blinding snowstorms raged for weeks on end. At times, even in Magadan, walking from one house to another was almost impossible. On several occasions communication with the taiga was completely cut off, and no food could be sent to the inland camps. Since the supplies the prisoners could take with them on leaving Magadan were extremely small, famine would set in.... In addition, in the absence of barracks men had to live in tents or, more often, in brushwood huts, with the temperature at -60. In spite of the insufferable cold, the prisoners went on with their work. Even under normal taiga conditions prisoners died by the hundreds and thousands, and nearly everybody had frostbitten hands and feet. What went on in some of the winter camps must have remained a mystery to the authorities, since in some no living beings were left--neither prisoners nor guards, or even dogs. One of the valleys of the region, the Shaivinski, has since been called 'the Valley of Death.' ...a party of prisoners numbering several thousand, together with the entire convoy of guards, lost their way in the blizzard and died to a man. It used to be said in Magadan that of all those who were 'thrown' into the taiga in the first heroic year of Dalstroy, only one out of 50 to 100 came back."[6]

The Magadan-Seimchan highway proved to require more than the planned two years, and the work was not completed until 1937. In return for this accomplishment, Dalstroy and Berzin were expecting to receive generous rewards. However, upon his arrival in Moscow Berzin was caught in the vast purges of that year and was executed, having been charged with "having ties with capitalist countries, of selling gold to foreign countries, of surrounding himself with confessed or secret 'Trotskyites' as well as other oppositionists, and of planning a coup d'etat in the region and seizing all power so that he could secede from the USSR and join the United States or perhaps Japan."[7]

b. Violence under Garanin (1937-1938): The years 1937 and 1938 resulted in the purges of countless "oppositionists," and Magadan had a large turnover in personnel; many of the NKVD personnel were purged, and a new administration was ushered in with the appointment of Garanin to lead Dalstroy. 635 466 625

At this stage the population of Kolyma increased tremendously; about 100,000 prisoners were brought in annually. Most of those new prisoners were "counterrevolutionary elements"--people who had not done physical labor previously, such as scientists, artists, politicians, educators, leaders of industry, trade, among others. In 1938 the purge struck the prisoners in Kolyma when "Garanin undertook to liquidate thousands of intellectuals. Henceforth there was no more fur clothing for the prisoners. The standard equipment became wadded jackets and trousers which soon hung like torn rags.... The felt boots were replaced by shoes made of canvas.... The wretched rations of the prisoners were deficient in fats; the major component was bread."[8] However, the quantity of bread allotted to each prisoner was determined by the amount of work

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6 Ibid., p. 125.
7 Ibid., p. 131.
8 Lipper, Elinor, Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps (Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1951), p. 105.

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he did in accordance with the norm; since norms were set very high even for healthy peasants from the farms, intellectuals invariably failed to meet their quotas. Garanin frequently made trips throughout the various camps, seeking those who had not fulfilled their quotas--these were then shot. "This was still not enough. At night he would have thousands of enemies of the people taken out of all the Kolyma camps...and driven off to prison. This prison called Serpantinka is about 375 miles west of Magadan, in the midst of the forest, and it is probably one of the most ghastly institutions in the Soviet Union.... It was estimated that Garanin had the deaths of some 26,000 persons on his conscience.... He was finally recalled (1938)."[9]

c. Blundering of Vyshnyevetsky (1938-1941): After the arrival of Vyshnyevetsky "no change was made in the treatment, clothing, or food of the prisoners. But the summary trials and shootings of prisoners without trial ceased. The mortality among the miners remained at a constant 30%."[10] The cause of the downfall of the new head of Dalstroy was the expedition to Pyostraya Dresva Bay. In the spring of 1940 a ship was sent to that area with several thousand prisoners and some 800 free citizens on board to exploit the precious metals found to exist in that area. Inasmuch as the ship left so late, Vyshnyevetsky was warned of a possible disaster when the ice jams formed. Prisoners were shipped wearing only summer clothing and with thin shoes. At the destination prisoners began work on the construction of camps in which they were to be imprisoned. However, a hurricane destroyed all the efforts at the construction sites, and the following spring the remnants of the expedition returned to Magadan: 200 free men and 150 prisoners. Not one of the men who returned did not suffer from frostbite, and eyewitnesses in the hospital at that time claim that the survivors, to the last man, were either amputees or insane. For this enterprise Vyshnyevetsky was recalled to Moscow where he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment; his arrest was due to the fact that 600 free men had perished in the futile effort, but no reference was ever made to the thousands of prisoners who also perished.

d. The Regime of Nishikov (1941-present?): The new chief of Dalstroy was Lieutenant General Ivan F. Nishikov, who according to the latest reports still is in command; whether the execution of his superior, Beria, affected his status is not known. According to Elinor Lipper in her book "Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps," the authoress, who was imprisoned in various Kolyma prison camps from 1938 to 1946, states that:

> "he is icily, mercilessly cruel. By cruelty he pushed through the fulfillment and overfulfillment of the gold plan; by cruelty he won decorations and large money bonuses. In 1942 at the age of fifty, he divorced his first wife.... He placed her and her grown son, who was a state's attorney in Magadan, aboard a ship headed for Vladivostok, and married a young communist girl of 29 named Gridassova, a primitive, crude, avaricious creature, who is only too well known to myself and to other female prisoners, for she functioned as the harsh commander of the Magadan women's camp. Thanks to her husband's position she has risen in the military hierarchy and has been decorated. She is the head of Maglag, the camp district of Magadan and the surrounding region, and rules the lives of tens of thousand of prisoners.
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> The couple's country house is located on the highway forty-five miles northwest of Magadan. It is furnished and equipped in the greatest comfort and is surrounded

9 Ibid., pp. 106-107.
10 Ibid., p. 108.

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by Nishikov's private hunting preserve. Near by, the prisoners of the invalid camp called 'Seventy-second Kilometer' work in a glass factory which is under the special protection of Gridassova and consequently always registers a marvelous production record. During the War burnt-out electric bulbs were repaired there, since new bulbs were almost unobtainable and even tiny bulbs were sold at a hundred and fifty rubles."[11]

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7) The Kolyma Buildup (1932-1946): As has been indicated earlier, Magadan and the entire Kolyma area were almost uninhabited in 1932 when the expedition under Berzin reached Nagayevo port; however, although at a fantastic cost in human lives, remarkable development of the Kolyma area was made. As early as 1946 it was clearly known that Dalstroy's extensive and many-sided activities were coordinated in a system of administrative organizations, each of which deals with a specific section of the region's economy—the centers of all these organizations are located in Magadan. At that time the following were known to exist: administrations of supplies, fish industry, coal, wood manufacturing industry, road building, agriculture, motor transport, and a few others. Essentially these administrations have the same task—they must insure uninterrupted operation and success in the chief industry of the region—gold mining, and with this ultimate goal in mind, they must supply all necessary materials and products. The ideal situation, as desired by Dalstroy and no doubt by Moscow as well, seems to be for Magadan to be completely self-sufficient and to turn over to the state all gold mined. As far as the fishing industry is concerned, it is known that fish is exported from Kolyma to Vladivostok. Attempts have been made to extract oil locally to supply motor transport in the region; however, there has been little success in this project although the presence of oil deposits in the area has been definitely established.

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Road construction was one of the primary tasks upon the initial efforts in Kolyma; just before World War II, another spurt in road building occurred. In 1939 the administration of road building was split into two independent organizations, one for the south and one for the north. By that time, the trunk highway from Magadan to Seimchan was being extended in the direction of the newer gold fields on the upper Indigirka River, and a number of side roads were also constructed to connect the main gold fields on the upper Kolyma River with the highway. Altogether, according to the best estimates, there were approximately 901 kilometers of paved roads in actual use at that time. However, this was inadequate, and in 1939-1940 a new plan of extensive road building was drawn up covering the construction of new roads in the extreme north, at the Kolyma estuary, and in the south, on the upper Kolyma, in the so-called "old" gold mining districts. In addition to new tributary roads, work was started in 1939 on the construction of a second motor highway from Dresva Bay on the Sea of Okhotsk to the gold-mining territory on the upper Kolyma. Even far more reaching were the plans for road construction east of the Kolyma estuary, in the tundra of the Arctic coastal region, down to the Bering Strait, where geological exploration had discovered gold fields of exception richness, perhaps exceeding those of the upper Kolyma. There have been no exact data concerning these plans; understandably, the information coming from the deep interior of the Kolyma region is generally far more scant than that coming from Magadan. However, at the beginning of the Russo-German War in 1941, all these plans for road construction were curtailed for obvious reasons. As has been indicated earlier, practically all construction activities were halted and many short-term prisoners were even sent back to European Russia where they served actively in the defense of the Soviet Union. In connection with the construction of roads just prior to the German

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11 Ibid., pp. 110-111.